

MONTAUK POINT LIGHTHOUSE HISTORY WALKING TOUR



PLEASE OBSERVE SOCIAL DISTANCING
WHILE ENJOYING THE GROUNDS!

FOR YOUR ENJOYMENT WE HAVE PROVIDED SIGNAGE THAT CORRESPONDS TO THIS
WRITTEN GUIDE. YOU MAY START YOUR TOUR FROM ANY POINT OF REFERENCE.

1. CONWAY VISITOR CENTER/GIFT SHOP

The original gift shop was located in what is now the Gilmartin Room of the Museum. This new shop was made possible by a generous donation from Montauk residents E. Virgil and Elaine Conway. It is owned by the Montauk Historical Society, and proceeds from the gift shop sales go to support the Lighthouse. The Lighthouse does not receive state or federal funding.

2. BARN

The barn stands on the site of an original barn that was blown down in a storm on September 23, 1869. Built in 2015, it is the most recent structure on the property.

3. 1838 BUILDING

This was constructed as an addition to the original keeper's dwelling, which was built in 1796. It was used to house visitors to the Lighthouse in the 1800s, when travel from Amagansett took six hours and overnight accommodation was often essential. Later used for storage, it was converted into a garage in 1939.

4. GARDEN

The first garden, kept by the keepers in the 1800s, was difficult to establish, since nothing grew very well in the sandy soil. With care, it eventually grew to three times the size of the present garden. Located on the site of the original garden, it produces flowers and vegetables annually.

5. SENTRY POST

Constructed by the US Army when it occupied Montauk Lighthouse and neighboring Camp Hero during WW II, the post originally stood about 30 yards to the west. In 1999 it was relocated to its present site.

6. BARRACKS LOCATION

In the middle of this open meadow, a barracks was constructed during World War II that housed 30 personnel. Officers were quartered in the keepers dwelling at the top of the hill. The barracks were removed in 1949.

7. WWII TARGET PRACTICE

When the US Army and US Coast Guard took over the Lighthouse during WW II, this wooden barrier was constructed for use by personnel for target practice. Some of the shells fired are still imbedded in the walls.

8. MEMORIAL BENCHES

The benches around the flagpole display the names of former Presidents of the Montauk Historical Society.

Over ⇨

9. KEEPER'S DWELLING

Built in 1860, it replaced the original dwelling that was located in front of the garage at the foot of the hill. It was built to house the families of the keeper and his two assistants. In 1912 the house was extended 14 feet to the north to create additional space for the families. Note the difference in the appearance of the foundation under the extension.

10. MONTAUK POINT LIGHTHOUSE

Commissioned by President George Washington in 1792 and built in 1796, it is the oldest lighthouse in New York State, and the fourth oldest lighthouse in continuous operation in the United States.

Originally 80 feet tall, it was altered in 1860 to its current height of 110 feet, six inches. First lit with whale oil and other products over the years, the Lighthouse was electrified in 1940 and automated in 1987.

In March of 2012 it was designated as a National Historic Landmark, only the twelfth lighthouse in the nation to bear that honor.

11. FIRE CONTROL TOWER

Constructed of splinter-proof concrete by the U.S. Army in 1942 when they took over the Montauk Lighthouse property during World War II, it was part of the Eastern Coastal Defense Shield. It contained radar equipment, used by personnel to scan the ocean for the presence of enemy submarines.

12. FOG SIGNAL BUILDING

Constructed in 1897, this building contained the engines that operated the fog signal apparatus. When the Lighthouse was automated in 1987, Coast Guard equipment was installed in the building for that purpose.

The entire building was restored to house the Oceans Institute, which opened in 2015 as part of the Montauk Point Lighthouse Museum.

13. OIL HOUSE

This was one of several structures built in 1904 by the US Navy to support a Marconi wireless station that existed on the property from 1903-1906. Of these structures, only the Oil House remains today. It is used for storage.

14. LOST AT SEA MONUMENT

Designed by sculptor Malcolm Frazier, the monument was dedicated in 1999. The 8-foot, 2,600 pound bronze statue of a fisherman represents all fishermen, past and present, who went to sea off Montauk, and never returned. The 7-foot-high, 12-ton granite base is inscribed with 120 names of East End fishermen lost at sea, dating from 1719.

15. EROSION CONTROL PROJECT

The cliffs around the Lighthouse property were fortified with reed-trench terracing beginning in 1970 by private citizen Giorgina Reid, who developed this form of terracing. Others joined her to complete the work. In the early 1990s a revetment containing 28,000 tons of rocks was constructed. All work was completed in 1998. In 2020, a new revetment is planned with 65,000 tons of additional rocks. This is expected to fortify the existing barrier for the next 100 years.

Thank you for visiting the Montauk Point Lighthouse! The lighthouse and grounds are wholly owned and maintained by the Montauk Historical Society, a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit corporation, which relies on ticket sales, gift shop proceeds and donations to support and protect this precious national landmark. All donations are tax-deductible.



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